

day. I will never forget the voices of those in their hardhats yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I will never forget the look in the man's eye who grabbed me by the arm, and he said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I wake up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, when I traveled your great State in the caucuses and then in the general election, I made a pledge that if you gave me a chance to serve, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work coming down the stretch, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thank you all for coming. I appreciate you being here. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. at the North Iowa Fairgrounds. In his remarks, he referred to Chuck Gipp, majority leader, Iowa House of Representatives; Mayor Jean Marinos of Mason City, IA; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zargawi; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in a Discussion in Rochester, Minnesota

October 20, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all. Please be seated. I might just decide to take off my jacket. We've got some work to do.

As you can see, I'm joined on the platform here with some of your fellow citizens. We're going to talk about economic policy and ownership and ways to make America a more hopeful place. And we'll be having a dialog here in a minute, but I've got something I want to tell you first.

I'd like your help in this election. We're coming down the stretch, and I'm here to ask for your help in turning out the vote. Get your friends and neighbors to go to the polls. We have a duty in this country to participate in our democratic system by voting. And get them going to the polls, and when you get them headed there, remind them

that if they want a safer America and a stronger America and a better America, put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

It is nice to be back in Rochester, and it's great to be back in the great State of Minnesota. And there is no doubt, with your help, we will carry Minnesota and win a great victory on November the 2d.

Laura said for me to send her best. I'm sorry she's not here. You know, when I—we went to the seventh grade together at San Jacinto Junior High in Midland, Texas. And then we got to know each other again later on, and she was a public school librarian. And I asked her to marry me, of course, and she said, "Fine, but never make me give a political speech." [Laughter] I said, "Okay, if that's one of the conditions, you got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that promise. She's giving a lot of speeches, and when she does, the American people see a strong, compassionate, warm, great First Lady. I love her dearly. We are enjoying ourselves on this campaign. It's really a lot of fun to travel with her, and it's really a lot of fun to travel with our daughters, Barbara and Jenna. They're now out campaigning. You know, I told them when they were kids, "We'll go on the great family camping trip." This is it. [Laughter]

I'm proud to be here with your United States Senator, Norm Coleman. I appreciate you, Senator. He's a good man. I enjoy working with him. He represents Minnesota in fine fashion. And I'm also proud to be here with Gil Gutknecht, the United States Congressman for this area, and Mary—where is Mary? Oh, hi, Mary, good to see you again. Thanks for coming.

I want to thank—the Governor is not with us. He's doing a great job, though. I appreciate Tim. I enjoy him. I like him. I trust him, and so should you. He's doing you a good job. I'm sure he's out working a phone bank, turning out that vote. I want to thank all the local and State officials who are here.

I really want to thank the grassroots activists. You never get thanked enough for putting up the signs, for making the phone calls, for doing all the hard work. I know how hard you are working. I want to thank you in advance for the great victory we're going to have here in the State of Minnesota.

I met Sister Chabanel Hayunga today. Where are you, Sister? I know she's—you got a terrible seat. *[Laughter]* You would have thought a soldier in the army of compassion would have gotten a better seat. I'm going to talk to the advance person here. *[Laughter]* The reason I bring her up is because she is active with the Senior Companion Program through Catholic Charities.

The strength of this country is the hearts and souls of our citizens. That is the strength of America. We've got a great military, and we'll keep it strong. We've got a world-class economy that's growing. We'll keep it strong. But the true strength of this society of ours is the fact that there are millions among us who love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. America can change and will change, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time, because of the deep compassion of people like the Sister. She, of course, says—typical of a true soldier in the army of compassion—out here on the runway when we had our picture taken at Air Force One, she said, “I am here representing the thousands of people in Minnesota who volunteer to make society a better place.”

You have set such a clear example, for which we are grateful. Thank you, Sister, for what you do.

The President's job is to solve problems. We had a serious problem when it came to our economy. The stock market had been in significant decline 6 months prior to my arrival—I want you to remind your friends and neighbors of that—which foretold a recession that took place. And then we had some corporate scandals which affected our economy. We passed tough laws that made it clear to people we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. That ought to be now abundantly clear. And then we got attacked, and those attacks cost our economy one million jobs in the weeks after September the 11th.

But we acted. I led; the Congress responded with tax relief. And the tax relief was vital. The tax relief encouraged consumption. It encouraged investment. And the recession was one of the shallowest in American history.

And the facts are clear. When you get through all the political noise, the facts are

clear. Our economy is growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We've added 1.9 million new jobs since August of 2003. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent, which is lower than the average rate of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. Your unemployment rate in Minnesota is 4.5 percent. The farm income is up. Homeownership is at an alltime high. We're moving forward. We have overcome problems. There's more work to be done, but think about where we have been and where we're going. And we're not going to go back to the days of tax and spend. We're not going to go back to the days of the policies that stifle the entrepreneurial spirit.

So the fundamental question in this campaign, after I've shown people I can lead and solve problems is, what else are we going to do? I'll tell you what else we're going to do. We're going to make sure we get an energy policy to my desk. I proposed a plan over 2 years ago that encourages conservation, that uses renewables like ethanol and biodiesel, that uses technologies for clean coal technology, that says we can explore for environmentally friendly ways for natural gas, a plan that recognizes we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to make sure this economy grows, we've got to keep opening up markets for Minnesota farmers and entrepreneurs and small-business owners. See, the tendency in American politics is to fall prey to economic isolationism. That would be bad for our workers. It would be bad for our consumers. The Presidents before me have opened up our markets, and I'm happy to open up markets too. It's in our consumers' interests. If you have more products to choose from, you're likely to get that which you want at a better price and better quality. See, it's in your interests. And so I'm saying to places like China, “You treat us the way we treat you. You open up your markets just like we've opened up our markets.” And I say that with confidence because we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the rules are fair.

And I want our soybean growers here in Minnesota to understand that one reason your prices are such that you can make a living is because you're selling soybeans to

China. See, they're using your soybeans. It's essential you have a President who understands what free trade means to people from all sectors of our economy.

I'll tell you what else we need to do to make sure jobs stay here in America and the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. We've got to do something about the regulations that plague our business and job creators and something about these frivolous lawsuits that are making it hard for small businesses to expand their businesses.

To keep jobs here, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money and keep your taxes low. And taxes are an issue in this campaign. See, I'm running against a fellow who has promised \$2.2 trillion worth of new spending. That's a lot. That's with a "T." [Laughter] That's a lot even for a Senator from Massachusetts. [Laughter] So they asked him, "How are you going to pay for it? How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Oh, we'll just tax the rich, raise the top two brackets." Let me tell you at least two things—three things wrong with that. First of all, you got to believe him that he's going to tax. You know, he's one of the first—one of the few Presidential candidates to ever promise raising taxes in a Presidential campaign, and that's a promise most politicians are happy to keep.

First of all, you can't pay for \$2.2 trillion worth of new spending by raising the top two brackets. You fall short by about \$800 billion. There's a gap between what is promised and what is deliverable. Actually, it's 1.4 trillion you fall short, beg your pardon, and so guess who usually gets to fill that gap between what is promised and what is capable of delivering? You do.

Secondly, when you're taxing the rich, you're taxing about 900,000 small-business owners. Most small businesses are Subchapter S corporations or limited partnerships. And they pay tax at the individual income-tax level, which means you're running up the taxes on the job creators. We're about to talk to somebody, you know, one of these people who are going to be affected by the top two brackets.

Thirdly, the rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason: to stick you with the tab. We're not going to let him tax you, because

we're going to win Minnesota on November the 2d and carry this country.

Let me talk about a couple of other issues. I want to talk about health issues. This is a good place to talk about health. Mayo Clinic, one of the great clinics—we always want our country to be on the leading edge of change when it comes to providing good medicine for our people. My mother keeps telling me what to say when it comes to Mayo Clinic. [Laughter]

So there is a fundamental difference of philosophy in this campaign about health care. I believe health care ought to be a commonsense approach, not one that increases the scope and power of the Federal Government. We ought to be worried about a health care system that moves people from private care to federally controlled health care because what that will lead to is rationing, bad decisionmaking. It will take the consumer totally out of the equation. Other countries have tried centralized health care, and it has failed. And the health care systems have slowly but surely declined in the quality of health care.

I have a different—and make no mistake about it, my opponent's program does that. He actually—he said in the camera at one of our debates, he said, "My plan is not a Government plan." You know, I could barely contain myself. [Laughter] I understand the nature of his plan. When you increase Medicare—Medicaid availability, it provides an excuse for small-business owners to no longer provide insurance for their employees because the Government will pick it up. See, 8 out of 10 new people subscribed to health care under his plan would end up on Federal rolls. That is an increase in the role of the Federal Government.

Here's a different approach. One, we'll make sure health care is available. We'll take care of the poor and the indigent through community health centers. Every poor county in America ought to have a community health center, places where people can get good preventative and primary care. It is a good use of your money to make sure the poor and the indigent get good primary and preventative care. We'll make sure our programs for children in low-income families are fully subscribed to. But to make sure health

care is affordable—that's what we need to address, the cost of health care.

Part of the reason health care costs are high is because third-party payers make the payment. There is no market discipline. There is no real demand—focus on demand in health care. That's why I believe in health savings accounts, tax-free plans to allow the decisionmaker to be you, a plan you own, a plan you carry with you from job to job, a plan in which you're totally in charge of.

Secondly, health care costs are up because of lawsuits. Make no mistake about it, junk lawsuits against our doctors are running up the cost of your health care. They're making it hard for small businesses to be able to afford insurance, and they're running good doctors out of practice. You cannot be pro-doctor, pro-patient, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a personal injury trial lawyer on the ticket. I made my choice. I am standing with our doctors and our patients. I support medical liability reform—now.

Two other ways to address the cost of health care: One is speed up generic drugs to the market. Plus, I support these Minnesota Congressman and Senator's idea of importation of drugs from Canada, so long as it's safe. We want you to take drugs that cure you, not harm you. I have a duty—it's easy for some in Congress to be calling for importation. I'm just going to make sure, before they come in, we know exactly what we're importing. You want to make sure that that which comes in from Canada is actually manufactured in Canada. You don't want to be buying something from a Third World country. And so we want to be safe. We want to make sure we do the right thing.

And fourthly, medicine, in all due respect, is like going back to the horse-and-buggy days when it comes to the use of information technology. I mean, you know, there's a lot of files that are handwritten still, and you can't even read a doctor's writing most of the time. *[Laughter]* So I believe in electronic medical records. I know we need to have a common language all across the medical field. They estimate that over 20 to 30 percent of the costs can be wrung out of the system with the proper use of information

technology. This is an exciting new era available for medicine. You just need a President who understands how to address the root causes of costs going up. And that's how you avoid federalizing health care, and that's how you put in place commonsense policies that makes sure the decisions are always made by doctor and patient, not by officials in our Nation's Capital.

A couple of other points I want to make very quickly—kind of getting wound up here—*[laughter]*—you notice the temperature in the room is rising. *[Laughter]* One, education is vital to make sure that we have a hopeful America. The No Child Left Behind Act that we passed is a great piece of legislation. It challenges the soft bigotry of low expectations. It increases Federal spending but in return says, "Show us. Measure and let us know whether a child can read and write and add and subtract." And we've got to find that out early. We cannot have a system that just simply shuffles kids through the system and hope we get it right. We need to know if we're getting it right. You can't solve a problem unless you've diagnosed it, and now we're diagnosing problems early. We're providing extra money for at-risk students and students who need extra help.

And there's an achievement gap closing in America, and it's vital. You know how we know? We measure. We can determine whether a child can read. And reading scores are going up for kids that have generally been shuffled through the school system. And we're not going to go back to the days of mediocrity and low standards. We're making progress, and America is better off for it.

So we're going to talk about education today. See, one of the things we've got to do is make sure education is not only strong for our kids; we've got to make sure education is available for all our citizens, because in a changing world—and the world is changing—the jobs of the 21st century oftentimes require a new skill set. For those of you involved with medicine know exactly what I'm talking about. Medicine is changing, and there constantly needs to be an upgrading of skills. And a great place to do that and a wonderful way to make sure people have got the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the

21st century is through our community college system. I'm a big backer of the community college system, and we're going to talk to a community college student here today about what it means to go back to school.

One other thing I want to talk about right quick, and that is Social Security. A President must solve problems, must confront problems, not pass them on to future Presidents or future generations. We have a problem in Social Security, and that is, when baby boomers like me retire, younger workers are going to have trouble paying for us and, therefore, have money available when they retire. That's just the facts.

Now, first, I want to address kind of the typical old-style, stale politics, and that is the politics of scare tactics towards Social Security. When I ran in 2000, I suspect here in the State of Minnesota—I know in other States—they ran ads saying, "If George W. gets elected, the seniors will not get their checks." I want you to remind your friends and neighbors, the seniors got their checks. Nobody's going to take away the Social Security check from our seniors. The fund has got enough money, and baby boomers like me are in good shape.

But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren when it comes to Social Security. Social Security will not be there when they need it if we don't think differently. That is why I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their payroll taxes and set up a personal savings account, a personal savings account that will earn a better rate of return than the current Social Security trust, an account they call their own, an account the Government cannot take away.

You know, I like to tell people that no one ever washes a rental car. [Laughter] There's wisdom in that. If you own something, you tend to wash it. If you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of our country. You know, one of the most heartwarming things about our society is when I hear people own something. They've started their own business, for example, or own their own home. We're going to talk to an owner right here, and that would be Jon Eckhoff.

Jon, thank you for coming. Please tell us the name of your company, and are you the

owner? And if you're the owner, how did you end up owning it? [Laughter]

Jon Eckhoff. Thank you for the introduction. Thank you. I am the owner of Venture Computer Systems, along with three other people, two of which are in the audience. And how did it get started? Well, that could be a complex story, but let's just say that I came to Rochester 16 years ago to work for the Mayo Clinic, a dream job for a kid from Iowa. And it was a great job, but I was always restless. I always wanted to do something on my own. So in an unfinished corner of my basement, I put up a whiteboard, and I bought a computer, and I started meeting. Some of the people in this room probably were in my basement in the beginning of Venture Computer Systems.

The President. It's a classic, right, the old kitchen table, the garage, in this case, the basement. [Laughter] That's what happens. Don't you love to live in a country where old Jon says, you know, "I've got a dream. I want to start my own business"? The role of the Government is to create an environment.

What do you do? I mean, like, here's your chance to sell some products. [Laughter] It's a marketing opportunity.

Mr. Eckhoff. Let's take it. Well, Venture Computer Systems sells computers, network security products to businesses like the ones that people in this room own. In fact, I recognize many of my customers, and if you're not my customer, give me a call after the—[laughter].

The President. No wonder he's successful. He gets on the President's time and sells some products. [Laughter]

So, let me ask you something. How many employees you got?

Mr. Eckhoff. We have 30 employees in Venture Computer Systems.

The President. See, that's classic small business, isn't it? Thirty employees. Did you hire any this year?

Mr. Eckhoff. We're going to add three more before December 31st.

The President. Three more? For the year?

Mr. Eckhoff. For the year.

The President. Yes, see, that's what's happening all across America, by the way. When

the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, when people are upbeat about the future, they hire people. Do you realize 70 percent of new jobs in America are created by small businesses like Jon's—70 percent. The job creators in America are the small-business owners of America. So let me ask you something. How are you organized legally?

Mr. Eckhoff. Well, we're an S corporation.

The President. S corp. See, now let me explain what that means. That's legalese. I'm not even a lawyer. Anyway—but I do understand facts. If you're an S corporation, they pay tax at the individual income-tax level. So when you hear my opponent say, "Oh, we're just going to tax the rich"—that means anybody that's got income over \$200,000 a year—I want you to remind your friends and neighbors he's talking about taxing job creators. It makes no sense to run up the taxes on somebody like Jon and his company as they're gaining steam, as they're hiring new people. If you take money out of his treasury, it's less likely he's going to hire somebody.

Let me ask you something—one other point I want to make. Part of good tax policy encourages good decisionmaking. And so part of the tax policy we had, we said, if you invest—in other words, if you purchase something—you're going to get a little tax break for small businesses.

Did you purchase anything?

Mr. Eckhoff. Yes, sir, we did. We purchased a variety of things. We used that money to buy a new truck. A lot of people have seen the Venture Computer Systems truck in the neighborhood.

The President. Always selling. Go ahead. [Laughter] Go ahead, what else did you buy? [Mr. Eckhoff made further remarks.]

The President. What he's doing is he's buying equipment to make his workforce more productive. And when the workforce becomes more productive, A, it means the worker is going to make more money, and B, it means he's going to stay in business. See, a open market is one where you compete, and you're constantly trying to get better. It's in the consumer's interest that he gets better. It means he gives a better product. Tax policy encouraged him to make cer-

tain decisions. He said he bought a truck. Well, remember, somebody has to make the truck. And when somebody makes the truck, it means the decision he made means that somebody is more likely to keep a job.

The tax policy we passed not only helped in a large sense; the tax policy we passed made the entrepreneurial spirit shine even more brightly in America. And more and more people are starting their small businesses today, which is great for our country.

Michele Clements is with us. All right, Michele, what did you used to do?

Michele Clements. I was a full-time employee at a local electronics manufacturing plant here in Rochester. And in February of 2003, they laid us all off and sent our jobs overseas.

The President. Right. So this is the classic case of somebody being affected by jobs going overseas. The fundamental question is what does society do about it without harming our markets and our economy? What do you do about it? Well, the first thing you do about it is you make sure this is the best place in the world to do business. You make sure it's the best place for jobs to continue to grow here. You make sure Jon is optimistic so he continues to grow his jobs. But also, you've got to help people.

And so what happened?

Mrs. Clements. Well, after we found out we were losing our jobs, we—shortly after that we found out we qualified for retraining programs through the Dislocated Worker Program, if we wanted to go back to school to further our education and get back into the workforce.

The President. Right. Right. And so, like, you hadn't been in school for a while. I'm not going to ask you how long. [Laughter]

Mrs. Clements. It's been a while.

The President. It's been a while. You had a husband and two daughters, been a mom and everything, and you go back to school. Where?

Mrs. Clements. Right here at RCTC in Rochester.

The President. Yes, very good. So what was it like? I mean, I'm sure people are listening out there who wonder whether or not they could go back to school at this point in their life. Was it as tough as you thought?

Mrs. Clements. It was a big step.

The President. Yes.

Mrs. Clements. It was not easy to go back, but it was well worth it. I'm in the law enforcement program here at RCTC. Law enforcement was something that I always wanted to get into, but because of financial and family commitments, I wasn't able to do so. And if it wasn't for the funding I received through the retraining program—

The President. Trade adjustment assistance, retraining programs—listen, the Federal Government has got ample money to help people go back to school. *[Applause]* Don't clap for me; clap for her. She's the one who made the decision to go back to school. Yes, we can't pass a law that says somebody has got to want to improve themselves. But the role of Government is to say, "Here's an opportunity. Here's a chance."

And so, you're now doing something—you're being trained for something you've always wanted to do, law enforcement. Well, it's a noble profession. Thank you for doing it.

And secondly, what's interesting is, I asked her—kind of none of my business, but you know, anyway—I asked her anyway, "Are you going to make more money?"

Mrs. Clements. Yes, sir, hopefully at least 50 percent more than what I was making at the plant.

The President. Yes, listen to that. I want everybody to hear that. With a little education—in other words, improving skill sets, you make more money. By going back to a community college, with Government help, you become a more productive worker. And when you become a more productive worker, your wage goes up. And her wage went up.

Let me tell you something else interesting. You know, when we cut the taxes, we cut them for everybody who paid taxes. I was one—I'm a fellow who believes, if you pay taxes, you ought to get relief. We ought not to try to pick and choose winners when it comes to tax relief. But we also helped our families. We raised the child credit to \$1,000 a child. We reduced the penalty on marriage. The code ought to encourage marriage, not discourage marriage.

And this family saved \$1,700 a year in tax relief, see, and the fundamental question in

this campaign is who can spend the \$1,700 better, this family or the Government? I believe this family can spend their money better.

Good job. Thank you.

The homeownership rate in America is an alltime high. More and more people from all walks of life are owning their homes for the first time. And Jill Wooten is with us. She is a first-time homeowner. First of all, you work.

Jill Wooten. I work. I'm a teacher at Gage Elementary School—love it.

The President. Fabulous. Thank you for teaching. Husband, Jesse.

Mrs. Wooten. He's the cute guy in the front row right there. *[Laughter]*

The President. Having trouble finding one. Oh, there he is. *[Laughter]* I agree, yes. It's an election year—anyway. *[Laughter]* We just embarrassed Jesse—

Mrs. Wooten. I know. He's beet-red. Shouldn't I be the one red up here?

The President. No, you're doing great. So why did you all decide to buy a home?

[Mrs. Wooten made further remarks.]

The President. Isn't that wonderful to hear? You know, there's nothing better in a society, where more and more people open up the door where they live and say, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property." If you own something, you care a lot about a lot of things, like your future. That's why we want to have people own their own savings account—health savings account, so they can manage their health care, or own a piece of their retirement, if you're a younger American, or own your own business or own your own home. A hopeful America is one in which ownership is spread throughout all our society.

We've got good plans to help people own their home. By the way, this family will save \$2,500 in 2004 on tax relief. You know, you hear this—it matters. The tax relief helps. It helps the American family be able to realize their dreams like owning their own home. And by the way, my opponent voted against every one of these tax reliefs that I talked about—voted no when American families were on the line, voted no when it came to

raising the child credit, voted no when it came to reducing the marriage penalty.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. There is a big difference in this campaign. Make no mistake about it. Make no mistake about it. There is a different philosophy, a different attitude. He trusts Government. I trust the people.

Good job. Really good job.

The platform wouldn't be complete without a farmer, Duane Alberts, Pine Shelter Farms.

Duane Alberts. That's correct.

The President. Good, yes. And you do what?

Mr. Alberts. Well, Mr. President, it's time to kill the death tax. I just want to start out that way.

The President. Well, he's got—the man's got an opinion. We've got it—it's on its way to extinction. Unfortunately, it pops back up. It's going to be an odd year in 2010. You can imagine people—I mean, it goes away in 2010; it pops back up in 2011. So people are going to have some weird choices in 2010 when it comes to the death tax, but never mind. *[Laughter]* It's a little morbid.

So why are you that concerned about it? Here's a farmer, a dairy farmer, got a lot of money tied up in inventory and land.

Mr. Alberts. That's correct. I farm in—I'm a fifth-generation farmer, a fifth-generation dairy farmer. Some of the sixth generation is sitting out here in the second row.

The President. Let me guess. Oh, yeah.

Mr. Alberts. I farm in partnership with my—in partnership with my father and my two brothers, and we milk 550 cows. Now, I used to have—

The President. By hand?

Mr. Alberts. Not anymore. Not anymore. *[Laughter]* You could ask my father about that, I suppose.

The President. Good. I just wanted to tell you there's a new kind of way to milk if you do.

Mr. Alberts. But we—but I used to have another partner. My uncle passed away 7 years ago, 7 years ago now. It's hard to believe it's been that long. But while my Uncle Myron was alive, he paid all the taxes, income taxes, Social Security taxes, payroll taxes, property taxes, sale taxes. He was loaded with

taxes. And when he died, the estate tax bill came, and that came to \$1,000 per cow.

The President. See, you can understand why people who farm the land or small-business owners that have got their assets—I mean, their money tied up in assets are worried about a tax that causes them to have to liquidate a herd to pay for it, I guess is what you're saying.

Mr. Alberts. That's right. That's right. It's hard to believe that a tax can be so huge, actually, that farmers, ranchers, and small-business men have to buy insurance to pay for it.

The President. Yes. And so what we've done is we've put the death tax on its way to extinction. But I'm telling you, it's coming back, unless you have the right President. I think we need to get rid of the death tax forever—once and for all.

People talk about simplifying the code. By the way, the Tax Code needs to be simplified. It's a complicated mess. A major portion of the Tax Code is the death tax. Once we get rid of that once and for all, it will help simplify the code. We need to do more work, don't get me wrong. But I want to thank you for sharing.

People have got to understand the death tax hurts our farmers, hurts our small-businessmen. People say we've got to protect the family farmer. You can't be a family farmer if you have to liquidate your farm in order to pay the death tax.

You got something else you want to say? Good job.

Mr. Alberts. I do want to stress that my uncle did his estate tax planning. He did everything right. He bought the insurance, but the annual premiums were \$25,000 a year.

The President. Yes, see, when you get rid of the death tax, you don't have to worry about lawyers, and you don't have to worry about premiums and insurance. All you've got to worry about is who you want to leave your property to. And that is a fundamental American right. You ought to be able to leave your property to whoever you want to leave your property to. Thank you, sir.

I've got something else on my mind—two other things on my mind. I told you it's a changing world. Some things don't change,

the values we try to live by, courage, compassion, reverence, and integrity. Our basic beliefs don't change. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. And we stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

Let me talk about the security of our country right quick. Please be seated. This may take a little longer than you hope. *[Laughter]* The most solemn duty of the American President is to protect you, is to protect the American people. In this dangerous world—in this dangerous world, if our country shows uncertainty or weakness, this world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

I want to share with you some of the lessons of September the 11th. First, we face an enemy that has no conscience. They are coldblooded killers. They would just as soon kill in a schoolhouse as they would bomb the Twin Towers with our airplanes. Therefore, we can never negotiate with them. We can never hope for the best. We can never say, "Oh, gosh, well, maybe if we change our behavior, they'll change their ways." The only way to deal with them is to find them and bring them to justice before they hurt us again.

Secondly, we are fighting a different kind of war, but it is a—this war requires a complete strategy. Not only will we continue bringing Al Qaida and like terrorists to justice—and by the way, three-quarters of them have been brought to justice, and we're after the rest of them—but we also must make it clear to others that if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist. And when the President says something, I think the President must speak clearly and mean what he says in order to keep the peace.

And so I meant what I said to the Taliban who were harboring Al Qaida. Remember, thousands of people had been trained in Afghanistan under the—with the consent of the Taliban. And so I said to the Taliban, "Get rid of Al Qaida. Join the community of free nations." They ignored our demand, and as a result of the brave actions of the United

States military, the Taliban have been routed from power, Al Qaida training camps were destroyed, and 25 million people lived in a free society.

I want our youngsters here to think about what has happened over a course of 3½ years. Something amazing has taken place, truly amazing, in Afghanistan. You know, it wasn't all that young ago that young girls couldn't go to school. Two-and-a-half years is really nothing in the march of history, when you think about it. And their mothers were taken into the public squares and whipped if they didn't toe the ideological line of the Taliban, those ideologues of hate. Because we acted in our self-interest, because we upheld doctrine, the people of Afghanistan went to the polls to vote for a President. The first voter was a 19-year-old woman. Think about that.

There weren't a lot of people who believed 3½ years ago that Afghanistan would ever be free, but Afghanistan is free now. And it's in our interests that they are free. Not only did we uphold doctrine, but a free society is one that is now an ally in the war on terror. A free society sets such a hopeful example for others. Free societies do not export terror. Free societies help defeat the hopelessness that enables terrorists to breed. Free societies equal peaceful societies.

The second—the third lesson is that when we see a threat, we must deal with it before it fully materializes. Saddam Hussein was a threat. He was a threat because he hated America. He was a threat because he was shooting missiles at American airplanes. He was a threat because he harbored terrorists. He was a threat because he invaded his neighbors. He was a threat because he had used weapons of mass destruction. He was a threat.

Now, we didn't find the stockpiles we all thought were there. That includes me and my opponent. But we did realize that he was gaming the Oil for Food Programme to get the world to turn a blind eye, to continue to weaken the sanctions so he could reconstitute his weapons programs. And the danger America faces is the nexus of terrorist organizations and weapons of mass destruction. That's a danger. It is a threat.

We cannot hope for the best in this world—in the post-September the 11th world. We must deal with every threat. Military is always the last option. That's why I went to the United Nations. I was hopeful that diplomacy would work. But the 17th resolution failed just like the first 16 resolutions. We passed the resolution, but Saddam wasn't afraid of a resolution. He wasn't worried about the United Nations or the will of the free world, because the will didn't mean anything to him in the past. And so he ignored the demands. I have a choice to make: Do I trust a madman and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to defend this country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

And now we're—Iraq is headed toward elections. Remember the skepticism about elections in Afghanistan? I do. Well, the same skepticism exists about Iraq. Can they ever be free? Do they ever want to vote? Of course they do. People want to be free. People love the idea of a free society. And so we're headed toward elections, and there are people there who are trying to stop them. Freedom is the greatest fear these terrorists have. That's why Zarqawi is fighting—Zarqawi who had been in Afghanistan, routed out of Afghanistan when his training camp was destroyed, comes to Baghdad, gets medical help in Baghdad, working with people in northern Iraq, prior to our arrival, on poisons and chemicals, and he's now fighting to stop the advance of freedom. He's a known killer.

And this is where my opponent and I disagree. He said, after September the 11th he wasn't fundamentally changed. I mean—and it reflects in his policies. He believes that this is a war only for intelligence and law enforcement. It is a limited point of view, which is a dangerous point of view in the world in which we live. He said that Iraq is a “diversion” from the war on terror. What does he think, Zarqawi has become a peaceful citizen? Does he think Zarqawi is going to change his ways? Zarqawi wants to destroy American life. Zarqawi was plotting and planning to attack us. It is essential we defeat Zarqawi there so we don't have to face the likes of him here at home.

You cannot win a war when you don't believe we're fighting a war, and that's the problem with my opponent's policies. They're limited in view, and that would lead to a danger for America. We must use every asset at our disposal. We must fully understand the nature of the enemy. We must take threats seriously before they materialize in order to do our duty to protect the American people. If we should uncertainty or weakness, this world will drift toward tragedy. And the American people can count on me to show no uncertainty or weakness in protecting you.

A couple of other points I want to make, and then we'll get out of here. When you have troops in harm's way, we have a duty to support them. That's why I went to the Congress and asked for \$87 billion of supplemental funding to support our troops in combat, really important money. I want you to remind your friends and neighbors that there were only 4 United States Senators—4 out of 100—that voted to authorize the use of force and voted against supporting our troops in combat, 2 of whom were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Voted to authorize force and wouldn't support the troops. People wonder why he made the vote. Well, I'll tell you why: Howard Dean was gaining in the Democrat primary. A Commander in Chief has got to stand on principle, not on the shifting sands of political convenience.

Audience member. Whoo!

The President. Undecided voter. [*Laughter*]

I want to share one other thing with you. I have a firm belief in the power of liberty to transform societies. At the heart of much of what I believe is this strong and unshakeable belief in the ability of freedom to change the world.

Let me share an experience with you that I've had over time as your President, and that is my relationship with the Prime Minister of Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi. He's a friend of Laura and mine, really interesting guy. I like him a lot. He's a lot of fun to be around. When I saw him at the United Nations, I said, “You know, I'm traveling our country talking about you. I hope you do not

mind.” He said, “No, go ahead and talk about me.” I didn’t ask his permission to tell you Elvis was his favorite singer, though—but anyway. [Laughter]

And it probably doesn’t sound too unusual to you that I would say that the Prime Minister of Japan is a friend, but think about our history, our recent history. Japan was the sworn enemy of the United States of America some 60 years ago. My dad fought against the Japanese. I suspect somebody in this crowd might have fought against the Japanese. I know somebody’s relative fought against the Japanese. They were the sworn enemy of the United States of America, and it was a brutal war. All war is brutal, and we suffered a lot in that war. Families were disrupted. Loved ones were lost. Hearts were broken.

And after World War II, Harry S. Truman, one of my predecessors, believed that liberty could transform an enemy into an ally. And so he set policy to say we’ll help Japan become a democracy.

Now, there were a lot of skeptics in America about that, and you can understand why, about that decision. “Why would you want to help an enemy,” some probably said. “How could an enemy possibly become a peaceful, self-governing nation? These people can’t be a democracy,” others would say. There was enormous skepticism.

But my predecessor and others had belief. And as a result of believing that liberty could transform an enemy into an ally, I now sit down at the table with my friend Prime Minister Koizumi, talking about how to keep the peace we all want, talking about how to make this troubled world a more stable, peaceful place.

Someday, an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader from Iraq, and they will be talking about the peace in the Middle East, and our children and our grandchildren will be better off for it.

I believe people want to live in a free society. I believe women in the Middle East want to live in freedom. I know moms and dads want to raise their children in a free and peaceful world. I believe millions plead in silence for their liberty. And I believe this not because freedom is America’s gift to the world; I believe this because freedom is the

Almighty God’s gift to each man and woman in this world.

I’m running again because I want to make sure hope and opportunity spread throughout the land, through good economic policy, through encouraging ownership for all people in our society. I’m running again because I hold certain values dear that I think are important for this country. And I’m running again because I fully understand the risks we face, and I have a strategy to protect the American people.

We’re going to win on November the 2d, with your help. May God bless you. May God bless our great country. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. in the Rochester Aviation Hangar at Rochester International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Gutknecht, wife of Representative Gil Gutknecht; Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarkawi; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in a Discussion in Eau Claire, Wisconsin

October 20, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Listen, thanks for coming today. It’s good to be back here in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. We’re getting closer and closer to voting time. I’m here to ask for your help. I saw—somebody has been helping—I saw a lot of signs up coming in. I want to thank you for putting up the signs. I know some of you are making phone calls, reminding your fellow citizen to go to the polls. I need your help. And with your help, we will carry Wisconsin and win a great victory in November.

So today I’m here to talk about reasons why I think your fellow citizens ought to put me in office for 4 more years. We’re going to talk about some issues, and we’ve got some fellow citizens up here to help talk about the plans and policies of my administration.

Perhaps the most important reason for you to put me back in for 4 more years is so that Laura will be the First Lady for 4 more years. She sends her best. She’s doing great. She